

TEXAS.

What a Correspondent of the *Medicine* (Ind.) Now and Then in Texas and What He Thinks of the Lone Star State.

PALESTINE, Texas, August 20, 1881.—Upon reaching the vicinity of the gulf, tired as I was, I made immediately toward the roar of the breakers, which I could not yet see. Ascending an elevation of sand, which the storms have heaped back from the shore, the whole scene was upon me.

In front and far around on either hand, encircling the front on which I stood in a vast concave line, the waves with their caps of foam rolling and thundering to the beach, while far out beyond could only be seen a flashing and tremulous motion of the water, till it faded into that deep, dark blue field that went on and on to meet in the infinite distance, the lighter blue of the sky.

A great number of birds of various kinds were on the sands, sea birds and shore birds mingled and confused. Plovers and cranes of various species, gulls, terns, and pipers, and in their midst a squad of huge pelicans stood filling their pouches with unfortunate fish. The larger birds slowly flopped out to a neighboring bar, while the smaller fry spread to the right and left along the beach.

I walked down to the water's edge; the waves broke one after another, as they have done since "creation's dawn," and spread their waters upward on the sands, rolling to my feet many a shell that would have delighted some little girls in Indiana, as well as some larger ones.

I gazed long at the sea—I was going to say till I was weary, but I never grow weary; I have yet to experience monotony on the shore, or that the roar of the breakers has tired my ear.

I soon tested the surf bathing, which is most delightful on this beach, the sands are so clear and firm, the slope into the sea so uniform and gentle, and the waves rolled in with just sufficient force to render the bath daily exhilarating.

I afterward went to examine the work at the mouth of the Brazos, where the government is constructing jetties similar to those at the mouth of the Mississippi with a prospect of similar success. I could not see much, as there was little work going on, and that on the opposite side. They have not yet commenced on the west bank. Large quantities of fascines or tightly bound bales of brush, are used; and there is quite a business of cutting it alone on the Brazos.

The prodigious amount of fish, oysters, and other shell fish about the mouth of the Brazos, and, indeed, all along the coast, is almost incredible. The best and finest fishing is in the gulf; for oysters and other shell fish are found in the lakes, bays and lagoons, or shallow sheltered water.

A chain of lakes run along the coast, through the prairie from the Brazos to the San Bernard, filled with fish, oysters and other shell fish. It was not the season in which oysters are good, but the shells I saw lying about were very large.

The sea breeze here upon the beach was most refreshing. Notwithstanding the intense heat of the season and the day, one felt cool and comfortable in the vicinity of the beach. The thermometer at 2 p. m. indicated 91 degrees in the shade.

The landlady who presides over the only house of entertainment at this point had just been fishing in the gulf, and came in with three very large red-fish—a fine table fish. The largest would have weighed twelve pounds. She thought she could have caught a carload by evening, but had no use for them.

The landlord was just preparing to make his second garden, for, though he was close to the beach, and his garden very sandy, he says it will produce nearly all kinds of vegetables luxuriantly, planted at any time.

The Brazos and the San Bernard are the only streams of Texas, I believe, that empty directly into the Gulf without the intervention of bays or lagoons, and the beach between them the only beach on the mainland. All around the west of the sea line is an exterior coast of islands and peninsulas.

There are four or five families spending the hot months on the beach along here, from the country above. They reside in temporary frame structures or tents.

At the mouth of the San Bernard were a few empty houses, but no inhabitants. I should have suffered for water but for a fisherman who had a boat in the river and supplied me. The river is as salty as the sea for miles up.

There are lakes and bayous here; as usual, full of oysters and fish, and a dead alligator lay upon the bank of one of them.

I made a lonely bivouac by the moaning sea, but slept well. In the morning I took my last surf bath and bade adieu to the gulf. I would have been glad to have lingered days by that lonely shore, forgetting the outer world.

"But who can tether time or tide?"

The course of human events, like the sea itself, rolls on, and other scenes awaited.

I had intended, and attempted to ascend the banks of the San Bernard, as I had descended the Brazos, but the case was different. The land is lower on this side, and marshes and bayous from the stream pushed me far out into the prairie.

I wandered much by guess through the same character of prairie already

described, only lower in some places, having a tendency to marsh but covered with rich grass. It was a treeless, pathless, and to me a waterless expanse of grass. There were many cattle and sheep, but I thought as before, not many in proportion to the range. I at length saw the chimneys of a sugar-house, and arrived somewhat tired and suffering for water at the Bryan plantation, in a clump or knot, as it is here called, of live oaks, where I found all the characteristics of fertility belonging to this country.

On a marble slab covering a brick tomb beneath a beautiful live oak, I was very much surprised to read the name of

GEN. STEPHEN FULLER AUSTIN,

at least one of the great historic characters, if not the father of Texas. No eulogy, no history, was recorded, simply the name and the place of birth and death.

The place is neither a deserted nor a neglected one, but is at least an obscure one; but, perhaps, the great pioneer of Texas rests here as well as he would in her proudest city, with marble piled around.

"Can stored turn or an' mated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?"

I soon reached the Brazoria road.

Allow me, Mr. Editor, at the close of my somewhat personal narrative of my glimpse of this portion of Texas, to sum up and review, for the benefit of your readers interested in the future of the great Southwest, what may have been learned of the capabilities, particularly of Brazoria county; and what may be said of this county no doubt applies to a large portion of the gulf region of Texas, extending from the pine regions southwest along the coast, to the sands in the neighborhood of the Nueces, and back two or three counties in width, in all embracing a number of counties—with perhaps this exception, that Brazoria is supplied with navigable streams.

SOIL.

The soil of Brazoria county generally is rich beyond all reasonable expectations. I have examined the deep banks of the Brazos and find no difference for thirty feet down to the water's edge, and am told that the depth of these soils is positively unknown.

The origin of this wonderful fertility, we are told by the geologist, lies in vast beds and deposits of fertilizing ingredients in upper Texas, which the rivers have for ages been carrying down and depositing on the low land, a vast laboratory "where nature's chemist powers work out the great Designer's will." Suffice it to say the great bottoms of the Mississippi, or the delta of the Nile are not more fertile than the bottom lands of lower Texas.

CLIMATE.

This fertility is found in connection with a warm and equable climate that may be called semi-tropical; though frosts and sometimes freezing takes place, the extreme of heat is not greater than that of the Northern States in midsummer. To this we may add that, unlike other parts of Texas, there is almost always sufficient moisture.

These are then the chief conditions in any country for vegetable production. I have taken pains to inquire into the capacity of this country for each particular product, and where possible to examine the growing crops. First as to

CORN.

I have never seen larger corn than I saw in the Brazos bottom, though it is planted much further apart than with us (I know no reason for this), but from sixty to seven-five bushels can be raised to the acre in one crop, and two full crops have no doubt been taken from the same ground in one year, yet the price of corn is always good.

COTTON.

Cotton may be called the staple crop of Texas. The land here produces about twice as much as in the upper lands of Texas and other States. It is safe to calculate on one bale to the acre, worth about \$60. In cotton one hand can raise much more than he can pick, but picking cotton is light work for women and children, and a crop can be handled on either a large or small scale, without much capital.

TOBACCO.

The production of this abominable plant is almost incredible. I have seen now, the 20th of August, very heavy tobacco nearly ready to cut, which had already been cut twice, and the old colored man who raised it thought it was good for the fifth cutting. About four cuttings can be relied on of good tobacco.

I leave tobacco planters to make their own calculations. If it pays in other places to get one crop, what will it do here? The tobacco is said to be of excellent quality.

SUGAR CANE.

This is the great crop of value here. Though unlike others, its best results can not be obtained on a small scale, and to conduct the sugar business properly requires large capital.

It must not be supposed that there are only a few isolated places suitable to the growth of cane; the whole country is good sugar land, even close down to the gulf. The cane is planted sometimes every year. When not planted every year it grows from the stubs.

When the cane is in its prime it is safe to estimate the product at two hogheads per acre, easily worth at the mill \$140, with sirup enough to pay all expenses. Yet thousands of acres of these lands can be bought to-day for \$5 per acre. The explanation of this in-

consistency is want of labor. From this estimate should be, perhaps, deducted the fact that extraordinary winters occur, which kill a good deal of cane. It can, however, be raised and made on a small scale, as some families make for their own use, on a horse-mill and common evaporator both sugar and sirup.

These are the staple crops. Wheat I do not believe will ever succeed.

POTATOES.

of both kinds grow luxuriantly, and it would be hard to estimate their product, as several crops may be grown, and planting done without much regard to season; and so of all vegetables, cabbage being particularly fine.

FRUITS.

The principal fruits of Brazoria county at present are the peach and fig. These are limited in their productions only by the planting. One has only to place in the ground. The peach bears and is gone early. I found none in August, though there had been a large crop. The fig, unlike other fruits here, is a continual bearer; like the tomato its fruit is in all stages till frost kills the crop. All that is necessary to propagate the fig is to stick a slip in the ground. I do not know that the fruit can be used except by immediate consumption.

STOCK.

It may seem superfluous to speak of the stock resources of any part of Southern Texas. In this county, however, there are thousands of horses, cattle and sheep, reared and fattened on the prairies and in the timber; that are never, under any circumstances, fed a single grain. I also saw many hogs in both the prairie and timber; they were large framed but thin, and are never fed. When the live oak and pecan mast ripens they will fatten, and that is all there is about it. Poultry is raised with so little trouble that it seemed to be the staple meat diet of the people.

I have not spoken of timber; but when live oak becomes valuable and in demand, there is a mine of wealth to be opened in Brazoria. There are many enterprises which invite to this country beside the tillage of the soil. A canning establishment, for instance, that would utilize the almost perpetual fruits and vegetables, the fish the oysters of the coast, and the beef of the prairies, would certainly be surrounded by inexhaustible resources.

HEALTH.

From a great deal of conflicting testimony I conclude that ague and bilious fever prevail in some localities, but not in a more malignant form than in Indiana, and subject to much the same conditions. They are confined pretty much to certain seasons of the year, and as at home worse in wet years. From epidemics and other diseases it is very exempt. For drinking and culinary purposes cistern water must be used.

I desire here to correct one natural misapprehension. It is understood that the country bordering on the tide water streams must be low and level, as rivers conform their beds to the surface of the country, and tide waters can only ascend through a very slightly elevated land. All tide-water streams I have seen before have low and marshy banks till the elevation of the land begins, when navigation and tide ends; but it is not so with the Brazos in this respect. It is the anomaly of rivers. The land ascends by a gradual slope from the very gulf at the rate (just guessing by the eye) of one foot at least to the mile, while the Brazos maintains its level with the gulf, and a deep channel at that, by being sunk constantly deeper below the surrounding country. I cannot explain the phenomenon geologically, but take the conditions as they are, conditions enabling people to dwell on the banks of a navigable tide-water stream, in a dry and elevated country. So uniform is the slope from the gulf that I believe a person well versed could judge of his distance from the mouth by the depth of the bank.

Finally, the dwellers of this country could, with little trouble and expense, within a few miles from home, enjoy a summer resort, which, for surf-bathing, beach-driving, fishing, hunting and sea breeze, could hardly be excelled on the continent.

J. L. F.

"The Sweet By-and-By."

Many of our readers have doubtless heard the song which is known as "The Sweet By-and-By." Few of them, however, know its history. The words of the song were composed by Dr. Fillmore Bennett, now of Richmond, Illinois. They were set to music by Joseph P. Webster, now dead. The words were written in about fifteen minutes. Webster was a deponent and melancholy man, and the world seemed always to go wrong with him. One day he came in, and relating some of his sad experiences wound up by saying: "Oh? well, it will be all right by-and-by!" Upon the impulse of the moment, Dr. Bennett took up his pencil and wrote the words of song which have been so popular. Webster took his fiddle, and before the day closed the tune was arranged, and when he finished the work he said the song would live forever. It was first printed in the Signet Ring, published in Chicago, and in a short time 50,000 copies of the song were sold. It was afterwards printed in sheet form, and in the first six months 20,000 copies were sold, and since then it has had an average sale of 10,000 copies per year. It is also published in every hymn book that comes out, and this privilege costs \$50.

VENTRILOQUISM.

Some Tricks Which Ventriloquists Have Played. Interview with Professor Ditson.

"Who were the greatest ventriloquists?"

"Well, there was an old Athenian named Eurykles, who is spoken of in history as master of the art. Then there were Prof. Alexandre and Louis Brabout of modern times; they were both Frenchmen. Brabout lived in the fourteenth century, I believe, and was said to be the best ventriloquist the world ever knew. Alexandre lived at an earlier period, and was noted more for his mimic representation than for his ventriloquial powers. Prof. Love, of England, was celebrated in the art, and was rivaled by Prof. Harrington, who died lately in Revere, Mass. Of those living to-day, Frederick McCabe and E. D. Davies are the greatest. Davies is now retired in Australia, and McCabe has recently signed a contract to go there the present season. Davies was the first ventriloquist to introduce 'figures' as an assistant to the art, in America.

McCabe was a great practical joker. Several years ago he was on board of a Mississippi river steamboat and, forming an acquaintance with the engineer, was allowed the freedom of the engine room. He took a seat in a corner, and, pulling his hat down over his eyes, appeared to be lost in reverie. Presently a certain part of the machinery began to squeak. The engineer oiled it and went about his duties. In the course of a few minutes the squeaking was heard again, and the engineer rushed over, oil can in hand, to lubricate the same spindle. Again he returned to his post, but it was only a few minutes until the same old spindle was squeaking louder than ever. 'Great Jupiter!' he yelled, 'the thing's bewitched.' More oil was administered, but the engineer began to smell a rat. Pretty soon the spindle squeaked again, and slipping up behind McCabe, the engineer squirted a half pint of oil down the joker's back. 'There,' said he, 'I guess that spindle won't squeak any more! The joke was so good that McCabe could not keep it, and he often tells it with as much relish as his auditors receive it.

"At another time McCabe was confronted by a highwayman on one of the lonely streets of Cincinnati as he was returning to his hotel from a moonlight picnic. The robber presented a cocked revolver at the ventriloquist's head, demanding his money or his life. McCabe's quick wit saved him. He threw his voice behind the robber, exclaiming, 'Hold, villain, you are my prisoner!' The frightened scamp turned his head, and McCabe dealt him a blow that felled him to the ground. He then secured the revolver, and marched the scoundrel to a police station.

"Louis Brabout, the great ventriloquist, was also a great joker. The story is told of him that he fell in love with a beautiful young novice, who was soon to take the veil. The sentiment was returned, and Brabout arranged for an elopement. His innamorata succeeded in getting outside the convent walls, and the two hurried away to the house of a neighboring priest. The holy man was awakened and requested to perform the marriage ceremony. His refusal was a thing to be expected, but Brabout was too cunning for the old man. When he said 'No!' most emphatically, and was about to raise a commotion and have the novice returned to the cloister, a deep, sepulchral voice was heard coming from the bowels of the earth. It said:

"I am thy father, and am still in torment. Marry this couple to each other, and my probation in purgatory will be over."

The frightened priest called upon all the saints to protect him, and proceeded to perform that ceremony with greater alacrity than he had ever shown on similar occasions.

"Do you ever play jokes?"

"Not often. I am not given to such sports as a general thing, but occasionally amuse myself at the expense of others. Last year I was traveling with a musical combination. One day while riding in the cars I threw my voice into a covered basket and set up a furious barking like a dog. The lady beside whom the basket was sitting gave a scream and bounded out of the seat. Then I made a cat join in the row, and a brakeman came running pell mell to quiet the disturbance. He jerked the lid off the basket and found nothing but delicious peaches the lady was taking home. The crowd was considerably mystified. Then I set a bumble bee buzzing about the brakeman's ear, and he retreated. A gentleman who was standing near heard a wolf growl so ferociously behind him that he jumped about two feet high. Then the lady was led to believe that a mouse's nest had found lodgment in her pocket, and the circus was complete. But I don't believe much in such capers, and generally forego the fun I might have if I felt disposed."

Dampness in Brick Houses; the Remedy.

Hundreds of brick houses throughout the country are made most uncomfortable and unhealthy from the dampness which comes through the walls. This difficulty arises from ignorance in building—the neglect of some of the simplest and most reasonable precautions. Most men in building leave everything to the mechanic, and many of these last gentlemen, however industrious and praise-worthy in most respects, never learned the A B C of their trades. All brick walls in dwelling houses should be hollow and painted

outside. Then, between the cellar walls and the first course of brick there should be a layer of some sort of cement which becomes hard and impervious to water. In the last place, every house—brick or wood—should have a tile drain put all around it to the depth of three to five feet in the ground. This can easily be run into the drain which every well-regulated cellar is supposed to have, as a matter of course. By carrying out these simple and sensitive hints, a house need never be damp inside, and such afflictions as mold on the wall or in closets will never be occurring to afflict the housekeeper. It would seem that every man who undertakes to "boss the job" of building a house ought to be posted in such necessary, elementary knowledge of his calling. But not one in a hundred knows anything about it—at least in the country, where there is no system of sewerage. In fact, living near a thriving village where there are the usual number of "good" mechanics, we never heard this matter mentioned by but one man, though we have always been accustomed to hear these complaints of the dampness of houses. In cities where builders are, obliged to understand their business, and where competent architects are always found, "they do these things better." But such apparent necessities in buildings should, it would seem, be understood by everybody. It is a lamentable fact that they are not, and one that tells sadly upon the health of all who are compelled to live in these damp brick houses.

Bits of Common Law.

Drunkness is no excuse for crime. The law presumes that every person intends to do that which he does.

A parlor gift of personal property must be accompanied by possessions. The attempt to commit a felony or misdemeanor is an indictable offense.

The mortgagee and not the mortgagor must pay the fees for recording the mortgage.

A verbal release of debt not founded on a valuable consideration, will not bar an action.

Any one who takes possession of a minor's estate without the authority may be held responsible as a guardian.

Ignorance of the law is no excuse for the commission of crime, but ignorance of the facts may render a civil contract voidable.

Guardians if practicable must lend out the money of their wards on good security and collect the interest annually.

A person may have his domicile in one country or State and his citizenship in another. Citizenship is not lost or changed by residence abroad so long as the "intention to return exists."

The father is the natural guardian and custodian of his children; but in case of separation their custody may be given to the mother, if the father is from any cause unable to control or support them.

WIT AND WISDOM.

The clam has a larger mouth in proportion to its size than a human being, yet a clam never talks about its neighbors.

A Connecticut woman was appointed constable the other day, and the first thing she said was, "Now I shall catch a man."

They enforced the laws so strictly in Vermont that the man who disposed of a small pond was arrested for pool selling.

In Virginia when a man is caught stealing he says he is merely engaged in the Mahone movement; so they let him go.

WINE that has been bottled for years is like an unmarried lady of advanced age, because it is old made, and none the worse for it.

Chicago lake water has to be boiled before it is fit to drink, and when it is on the fire coming to a boil, the thirsty man generally takes beer.

When a mother says her son is a chip off the old blockhead, it is a question of great moment whether she means what says, or says what she means.

An article announcing the disease of a person, says:—"His remains were committed to that bourne whence no traveler returns accompanied by his friends."

THE Mikado of Japan is to have a new palace at Yeddo, which will cost \$5,600,000. Mike has evidently had some American contractors figuring on the job.

An article is going the rounds telling "How to keep off mosquitoes." What we want to know is how to get on to the blamed critters long enough to smash 'em.

Some of the girls of the period are parting their hair on one side. They do this because they do not wish to look like soft young men who part their hair in the middle.

A politician who stumbled and fell coming out of a saloon, explained to the policeman who assisted him to his feet, that he was just opening the fall campaign.

SKIGGINS was asked what he thought about cremation. He said it was all right enough for those who liked it, and a good many would use it because it was cheap; but he did not think it would be good in summer any way. Others who wished might experiment on such new-fangled notions, but as for Mrs. S. and himself, they would stick to the old-fashioned gutter, no matter what it cost.